



Erie City Iron Works records 0905

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Manuscripts and Archives

PO Box 3630

Wilmington, Delaware 19807

askhagley@hagley.org

URL: <http://www.hagley.org/library>

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Summary Information

Repository:	Manuscripts and Archives
Creator:	Erie City Iron Works
Title:	Erie City Iron Works records
ID:	0905
Date [inclusive]:	1864-1937
Physical Description:	14 Linear Feet
Language of the Material:	English .
Abstract:	The Erie City Iron Works was founded by Pennsylvania capitalist Bethuel Boyd Vincent (1803-1876) as the Presque Isle Foundry in 1840. The Works was a major manufacturer of boilers, stationary and portable engines and machinery for sawmills and steam riveting as well as railroad freight and passenger cars. Their records are largely comprised of accounting records.

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Historical Note

The Erie City Iron Works was founded by Pennsylvania capitalist Bethuel Boyd Vincent (1803-1876) as the Presque Isle Foundry in 1840. The firm operated as a partnership, originally known as Vincent, Himrod & Co., with William and David Himrod and William H. Johnston as the other partners. The partnership underwent many changes between 1840 and 1864, but Vincent remained the dominant, though silent, partner throughout.

The Erie City Iron Works was a major manufacturer of boilers, stationary and portable engines and machinery for sawmills and steam riveting. It also manufactured railroad freight and passenger cars. By 1880 it was one of the largest manufacturers of boilers and engines in the United States. The plant was expanded to include a machine shop, and it was renamed The Erie City Iron Works in 1851, the year in which Erie became an incorporated city, and incorporated on January 12, 1865.

Vincent retired in 1860 and in 1866 the firm came under the complete control of George Selden (1827-1893) and John H. Bliss (1823-1907) as Selden, Bliss & Co. The new owners expanded the firm into a manufacturer of national reputation. After Bliss retired in 1895, members of the Selden family retained control until 1966, when they sold their interest to the Zurn Manufacturing Company of Erie,

a manufacturer of drains and other specialized iron and steel fittings. This firm was actually a 1901 offshoot of the Erie City Iron Works.

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Scope and Content

The records of the Erie City Iron Works are comprised largely of accounting records. No records survive from before 1864. Account books are relatively complete from 1864 to 1890. Summary financial statements are available for 1871 to 1923 with some gaps. Purchase and receiving records include invoices and invoice books (1877-1883) and inventories (1864-1918). Sales and shipping records include commission books covering sales on consignment (1887-1907) and records of selling prices and cost details (1929-1937). Engineering manuals and advertising scrapbooks cover coal pulverizers, inclined watertube boilers, firetube boilers and Lentz engines. A sample of correspondence includes a letterbook of Selden & Bliss (1864-1867). The miscellany includes copies of letters of historical interest, such as one discussing the state of business during the final year of the Civil War, and orders for plates for the first unsuccessful Hudson River tunnel from 1874 to 1880. There are also printed articles on company history and a typescript of historical extracts from the employee magazine. The photographs, which are administered by the Audiovisual Collections and Digital Initiatives Department, include views of the plant, the manufacturing process, and many finished products, such as steam engines, boilers and heaters.

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Arrangement

Series I. General accounts (1864-1923); Series II. Purchasing and receiving records (1864-1918); Series III. Sales and shipping records (1865-1937); Series IV. Engineering manuals (1921-1930); Series V. Correspondence; Series VI. Advertising; Series VII. Miscellaneous; Series VIII. Photographs.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Hudson River (N.Y. and N.J.)
- Steel industry and trade.
- Foundries.
- Boiler-making industry
- Iron industry and trade.
- Pennsylvania
- Account books
- Scrapbooks
- Financial statements
- Erie City Iron Works
- John H. Bliss, 1823-1907
- Selden, Bliss & Company
- Selden, George, 1827-1893